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MIDDLEBURY NAMED ONE OF THE TOP PRODUCERS OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

By MANDY BERGHELA
Editor-in-Chief

In an April 7 press release from the Peace Corps, Middlebury College was ranked No. 7 among small colleges nationwide on the agency's 2026 list of top volunteer-producing institutions.

Since its founding in 1961, the Peace Corps has sent nearly 250,000 Americans abroad to work on locally driven projects in education, health, agriculture, environmental sustainability and youth development. In the past fiscal year, nine Middlebury graduates served in nine countries — Armenia, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, North Macedonia, the Philippines, Thailand and Togo. This year, several graduating seniors are expected to begin Peace Corps service.

Altogether, 549 Middlebury alumni have served as Peace Corps volunteers since the program's founding.

The rankings are based on the number of alumni serving during a given fiscal year, according to Peace Corps Communications Specialist Kelsey McMahon. The 2026 list reflects service between Oct. 1, 2024 and Sept. 30, 2025, using data self-reported by volunteers across institutions of varying sizes.

Peace Corps volunteers typically serve for 27 months, living and working in communities abroad, collaborating directly with local partners. The program is often described by the agency as "the toughest job you'll ever love," a phrase echoed by both current and prospective volunteers.

For many Middlebury students, the decision to apply to the Peace Corps is both personal and academic — but increasingly, it is also shaped by a difficult job market for recent graduates.

Recent reports show that the entry-level job market is among the weakest in decades, with fewer opportunities for young workers and rising barriers to entry. At the same time, entry-level roles are shrinking or requiring years of prior experience.

Programs like the Peace Corps offer another pathway. According to McMahon, the experience is designed to build both practical and interpersonal skills that extend beyond the duration of service.

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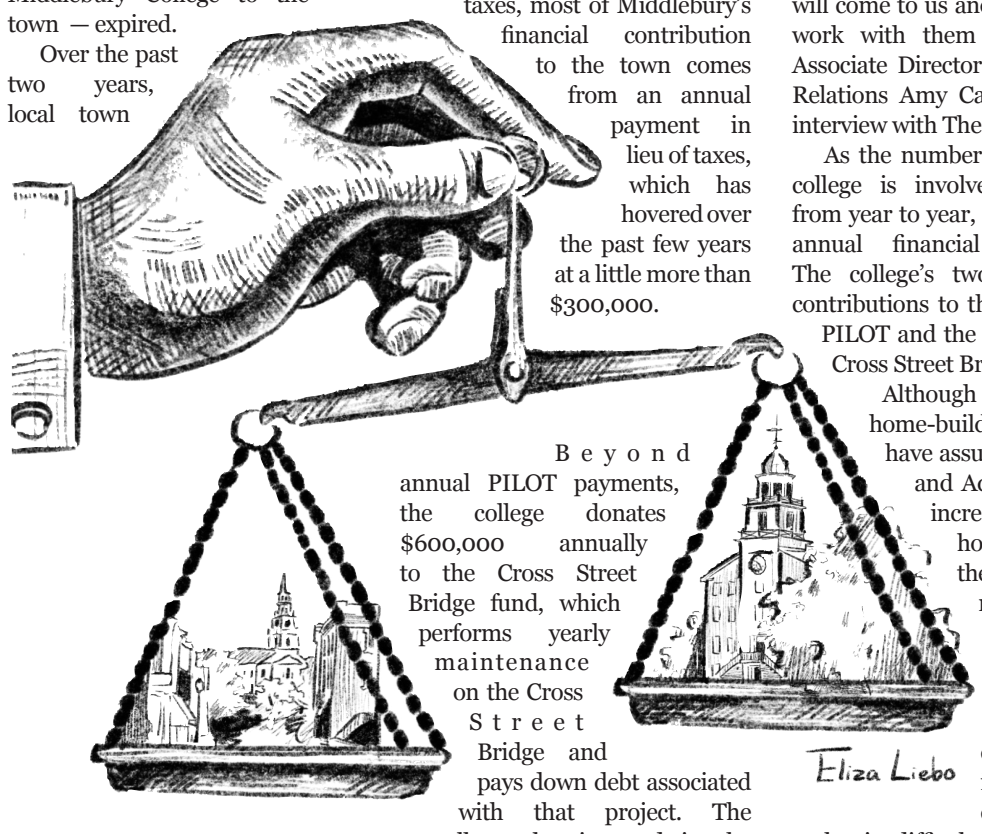
College pitches lower annual donation to the town amid PILOT agreement re-negotiation

By KAI ARROWOOD
News Editor

In June 2024, the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement — which set a fixed annual contribution from Middlebury College to the town — expired.

Over the past two years, local town government and college financial managers have been negotiating a new agreement that accounts for the college's increased investment in individual infrastructure projects in town. Although the new agreement is not yet finalized and is currently under review by the college's legal counsel, there is the possibility that Middlebury's annual donation to the town will decrease by nearly $100,000.



Middlebury College, like most peer institutions, does not pay property taxes on any land it uses for educational purposes, including athletic facilities. Although some of the land the college owns is subject to property taxes, most of Middlebury's financial contribution to the town comes from an annual payment in lieu of taxes, which has hovered over the past few years at a little more than $300,000.

Beyond annual PILOT payments, the college donates $600,000 annually to the Cross Street Bridge fund, which performs yearly maintenance on the Cross Street Bridge and pays down debt associated with that project. The college also invested in the recent renovation of the Town Hall Theater ($1 million), the construction of a new childcare center on Weybridge Street ($6 million), the construction of an affordable housing project and the renovation of the Ilsley Library ($1 million).

As the PILOT agreement is renegotiated, the college seems to be seeking a relationship that focuses more on investing in individual projects than on making a general cash donation to the town's annual budget.

"We contribute in a lot of ways, but a lot of times when individual capital projects come up, the town will come to us and talk, and we'll work with them and support," Associate Director of Community Relations Amy Carlin said in an interview with The Campus.

As the number of projects the college is involved with varies from year to year, so does its total annual financial contribution. The college's two set financial contributions to the town are the PILOT and the donation to the Cross Street Bridge fund.

Although the college's home-building projects have assuaged the town's and Addison County's increasingly tight housing shortage, the town voted to raise property taxes by nearly 10% in the 2027 fiscal year. The cost of living in Middlebury continues to make it difficult for businesses to find full-time employees who live in the area, and many staff members at the college itself are unable to find housing in town.

"If you don't find housing, how

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DAVIS FAMILY LIBRARY ANNOUNCES FURNITURE UPGRADE

MET LY / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
New furniture is expected to be placed in the Davis Family Library on July 1, 2026.

By MAJA MUSA
Contributing Writer

This summer, the Davis Family Library staff are planning an upgrade on the main floor of the library, namely new furniture, nearly two decades after its construction.

"We worked closely with the library's own space committee, as well as the custodial staff and facilities services to identify the number of chairs and recliners in bad shape," Rebekah Irwin, the interim dean of the library and director of Special Collections & Archives, said in an interview with The Campus. "We knew that about 30 chairs needed to be replaced, 15 of which were urgent. That is, for example, it could hurt someone, there was exposed metal, etc."

"Our starting points were high-visibility areas," Kimberly Marshall, the circulation specialist at Davis Library, said. She explained that these areas are on the main floor of the library, specifically the area around the printer room, elevator, water fountain, and circulation desk.

The Library Space Committee visited two classes in the History of Art and Architecture department to gather student feedback on their ideas. They connected with Associate Professor of the

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Caught between travel restrictions and summer housing costs, pressure mounts for some international students

By COLE CHAUDHARI
Senior News Editor

As the summer approaches and students continue to solidify summer employment plans, a number of concerns have been raised by international students who cannot return home.

For students studying at the college from other countries, the vast majority of whom are holders of F-1 visas, options for off-campus internships and jobs are limited, and traveling home for the summer presents a variety of challenges that include the possibility of not being let back into the United States to begin the fall semester.

An international student from the Philippines commented on the geopolitical pressures complicating a return home for the summer and explained that job postings put out by the college — required to stay in dormitories over the summer, with exceptions — are regularly snapped up in short order.

"It's basically because of the war in Iran," the student said. "Right now, the Philippines is facing an energy crisis, and that can have a lot of implications to a lot of things, transportation, and so on."

For this student, returning home over the summer is not an option because of the closure of many flight paths through the Middle East.

"So I am predicting as well that international flights would be expensive. There will be a huge possibility that it won't even happen because we usually cross the Middle Eastern, that path as well, right? If I were to go to the Atlantic, that would cost a bit more as well. My parents told me as well, to not go home as much as possible because they're just worried about my safety in general," the student added.

This student recognized how the variety of services, workshops, and programming offered by the college, dedicated to helping international students — administered primarily by International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) and the Center for Careers and Internships (CCI) — are typically very helpful, and expressed gratitude towards the college's efforts in helping international students.

This semester, ISSS and the CCI

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COURTESY PHOTO / PEACE CORPS

Middlebury ranks among the nation's top Peace Corps producers, as students pursue global service opportunities after graduation.

"Students see the Peace Corps as a powerful opportunity to put their education into practice while continuing to grow both personally and professionally," McMahon wrote in a message to the Campus. "For some, service becomes a valuable bridge: it strengthens graduate school applications, clarifies career goals, and provides real-world experience with global issues."

Clay Rosser '26, who was accepted into the Peace Corps in Cambodia as an educator, said that while the current job market played some role in his thinking, his decision ultimately centered on what he would gain from the experience itself.

"I mean, yeah, the job market isn't great right now," Rosser said in an interview with the Campus. "But for me, it was more about doing something meaningful and challenging — something where I could grow and actually take a lot away from the experience. You're not saving the world, but you are directly helping people's lives, and I think that's something valuable to do right after college."

For many students, language learning plays a central role in shaping their interest in the Peace Corps, offering a pathway to deeper cultural understanding.

Both of Zane Barnwell '26's parents served as Peace Corps volunteers — his father in Sierra Leone and his mother in Jordan — shaping his early understanding of international service. Barnwell, who was accepted into the Peace Corps' Morocco youth development program, said his interest in service abroad deepened at Middlebury, where studying Arabic led him to see language as a gateway to cultural understanding.

"I think that it was hard at first to study Arabic and feel so removed from the culture in this formalized setting, but then I met these amazing professors who had had these experiences abroad," Barnwell said in an interview with the Campus. "I realized I could have this opportunity to not only apply Arabic but to engage with a community that was supportive and teach me new ways to live."

Although Barnwell will pursue a Fulbright Program fellowship after graduation, he said he was drawn to the Peace Corps for its emphasis on community-based work.

"I want to work with kids and be an educator, but also just a good person," Barnwell said. "Peace Corps is one of those opportunities that is really challenging, but also one of the best ways to do meaningful work and make an impact in a community."

Ashley Aparicio '26's interest in the Peace Corps developed gradually over the course of her time at Middlebury.

"Peace Corps was never really something that I thought about until my sophomore year," Aparicio wrote in a message to the Campus. "But I knew that after graduating I wanted to spend some time abroad working or traveling before settling in the States."

After researching the program, Aparicio found that its long-term benefits stood out.

"I found that the Peace Corps provided a strong network of alumni and assisted volunteers in pursuing higher education, which pushed me even further into applying," Aparicio wrote. "I decided to commit because I want to take some time for myself to figure out what I would like to do when I decide to apply for jobs. Also, being placed in a foreign country is definitely going to help me expand my view about life."

Aparicio will begin her service in Indonesia in Sept. 2026, where she will work in the education sector as an English teacher for grades 7–12, helping develop curriculum and support local classrooms.

For some students, however, the decision to pursue the Peace Corps comes with an awareness of its limitations. Rosser pointed to structural constraints of the program, noting that its relatively short service period can limit its long-term impact.

"If you want lasting change, you need people who are there for much longer than two years," he said. "That's definitely a limitation of the Peace Corps — but it's better than nothing, and I still think it does a lot."

In a time of economic uncertainty and a difficult job market, the appeal of the Peace Corps lies not in its ability to solve global challenges, but in the opportunity it offers to engage with them directly. Programs like the Peace Corps provide a different kind of starting point, one defined less by immediate outcomes and rather by a willingness to step into the unknown.

BLUE BOOKS ARE HERE TO STAY: PROFESSORS REACT TO AI

By NOOR KHAN & LUKE POWER
News Editors

Three and a half years after ChatGPT's launch, the proliferation of large language models (LLMs) and their use by students has changed much of the student experience, including approaches to exam formats. Some professors are holding firm on using blue books to test students' knowledge, particularly in introductory courses, even as they explore ways to incorporate artificial intelligence (AI) tools in the future.

As per last year's Zeitgeist, 65% of Middlebury students self-report breaking the honor code, reflecting the rising prevalence of cheating.

Assistant Professor of Political Science Caleigh Glenn approached this semester's syllabus seeking to outline a qualified policy on AI use in her courses, but ultimately decided on a blanket no-use policy.

"My concern with encouraging a proliferation of [AI] use is that because it can be very powerful, it can also be very easy to reach for when things get hard," Glenn said. "Writing is hard. It's hard to sit down in front of a blank piece of paper and come up with an idea and come up with a nice way of putting it all together. That's the process of writing. I see writing as thinking, and that's sort of what we're doing here."

In her Introduction to International Politics course, Glenn assesses students through a mix of blue-book exams and shorter at-home writing assignments to evaluate both the substantive knowledge and the skills she wants them to take away from the course.

Professor of Political Science Matthew Dickinson has always administered exams through blue books and has no plans to change that approach.

"I've consistently used in-class blue book exams for my introductory and intermediate courses since I started teaching here more than 25 years ago, so I've not changed how I administer tests in those classes due to AI," Dickinson stated in an email to The Campus.

However, Dickinson believes that AI has led some of his colleagues to reconsider their own exams.

"Anecdotally, however, it appears that many of my colleagues who used to rely on take-home exams or written papers are now switching to bluebooks. At least one has moved to oral examinations," he said.

From the student perspective, the turn to blue books and handwritten exams is apparent to Peter Jenkins '28.

"In some of the classes that are more quantitative, we've now had to write out our code rather than type it because of cheating concerns. In my Computer Science class, we had people come in to speak with us about how ridiculously widespread cheating in our class was. In economics, our stats tests are now in person, too," Jenkins said.

Asked how that affects his experience in testing situations, he stated that it generally slows down his workflow.

"It's way more difficult to write an exam out than type it out. Especially if it's a long one, there's been times where I literally have to take a three-minute break to massage my hand during the exam. If you have to write out a six page essay it's brutal."

Other students see blue books as a way to demonstrate comprehension skills in an AI-proof sitting.

"I think it's a good type of exam because it evaluates your ability to structure your knowledge under conditions of stress," Youhn Bernardin-Duparc '28.5 said.

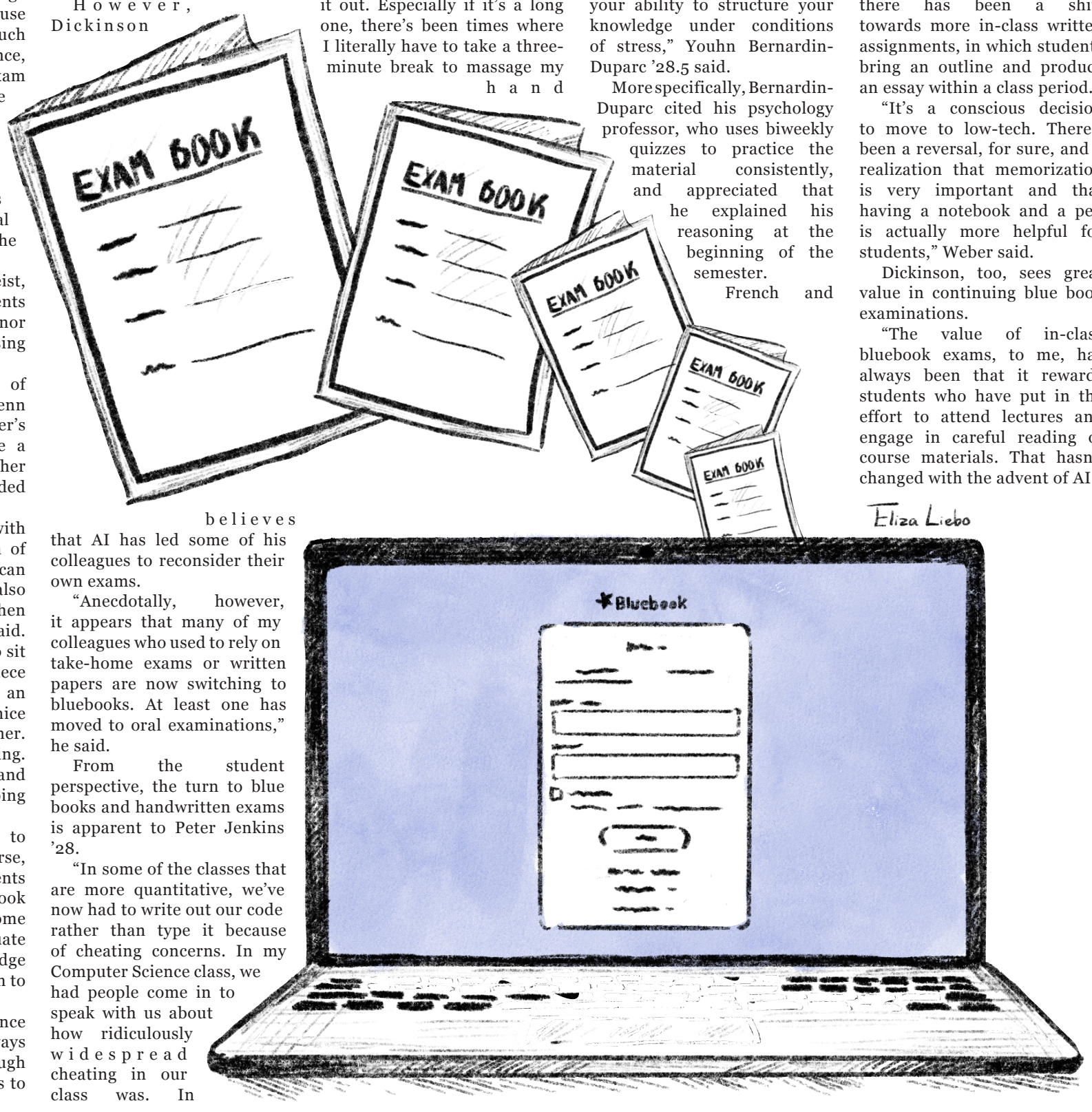
More specifically, Bernardin-Duparc cited his psychology professor, who uses biweekly quizzes to practice the material consistently, and appreciated that he explained his reasoning at the beginning of the semester.

French and Francophone Studies Department Chair Professor Julien Weber explained that his department has been having conversations about the use of technology in its classrooms, given the rise of tools such as Google Translate, years before LLMs. Across the department, there has been a shift towards more in-class written assignments, in which students bring an outline and produce an essay within a class period.

"It's a conscious decision to move to low-tech. There's been a reversal, for sure, and a realization that memorization is very important and that having a notebook and a pen is actually more helpful for students," Weber said.

Dickinson, too, sees great value in continuing blue book examinations.

"The value of in-class bluebook exams, to me, has always been that it rewards students who have put in the effort to attend lectures and engage in careful reading of course materials. That hasn't changed with the advent of AI."



College pitches lower annual donation to the town amid PILOT agreement re-negotiation

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do you find help? Everybody that works for me now, they don't live in town," Farhad Khan, owner of One Dollar Market and ten-year member of the Middlebury Town Selectboard, said in an interview with The Campus.

During a Middlebury town meeting on March 2, Town Manager Mark Pruhenski predicted "a couple of difficult years ahead," but hopes that property owners will not see any more double-digit tax increases.

"Any time the taxes go up, the burden goes on the property owners. So it's a challenge that most of the business owners are not very happy with the way we have been taxing," Khan said.

The town is currently exploring a local option tax. State sales tax applies at 6% to all sales in the town of Middlebury, and the town would then take an additional 1% as another potential revenue source for the annual budget. The town of Stowe is currently reviewing an increase in its local option tax, and if it passes, the Middlebury Selectboard would request a similar policy.

As property owners cope with increasing taxes, a conversation regarding a fair financial relationship between the college and the town has ensued. While the college's investment in projects in town helps the town take on ambitious initiatives, a decrease in PILOT funds would put pressure on Middlebury residents to fund day-to-day town needs, such as wastewater management and roads, through their taxes.

"It's beneficial more to the town to have something that goes into a general fund to be able to support wastewater, roads, maybe not the fun, flattering stuff," Isabel Gogarty, Middlebury Selectboard member, said in an interview with The Campus. "It's better to have that continuous fund as opposed to the strategy or ability to pick projects that align with the benefit of the college."

Still, the college remains a crucial piece in the renovation and buildout of town infrastructure. Since 2004, when the PILOT agreement was first finalized, the college has substantially ramped up its investment in the town and is factoring in that increase in the PILOT renegotiation process.

"Anything the college can do to help with workforce advancement, bringing more businesses to town, is something you can't put into a budget line," Gogarty said.

Beyond individual investment projects and annual donations, the college is a key economic driver for the town and the surrounding area. Middlebury is currently the largest employer in Addison County, and students, alumni, staff, and student families are the primary consumers of in-town businesses, although the majority of college staff live outside the town. According to Danielle Boyce, Middlebury Selectboard member and owner of American Flatbread, business at the restaurant was down 40% during the past spring break.

When NCAA tournaments come to Middlebury, as well as during move-in, graduation, and parents' weekend, business owners mold their business models to the fluctuation of students and their families over the course of the year.

"Business owners think about how to make downtown really accessible and lively so that when you're walking around with your student, you want to pop into their store," Gogarty said.

The overall relationship between the college and the town remains positive, as the college provides not only revenue for crucial infrastructure projects but a steady stream of consumers. The college is continuing work on the Stonecrop Meadows affordable housing project and pitching a potential industrial park buildout on Exchange Street.

"The future will focus on housing development," Pruhenski said in an interview with The Campus.

A potential decrease in Middlebury's annual donation to the town will not be finalized until the new PILOT agreement is ratified, which would last for another ten-year term. For now, the town is focusing on reopening a sustained dialogue with the college administration and mitigating any further substantial increases in property taxes.

CAUGHT BETWEEN TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS AND SUMMER HOUSING COSTS, PRESSURE MOUNTS FOR SOME INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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have offered a series of workshops to help international students find potential summer opportunities. ISSS also offers programming to help students apply for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT) approvals, which are required for off-campus experiences, as well as workshops on filing U.S. taxes.

However, what the college can provide is always tempered by competition among students vying for stable summer employment, housing, and dining.

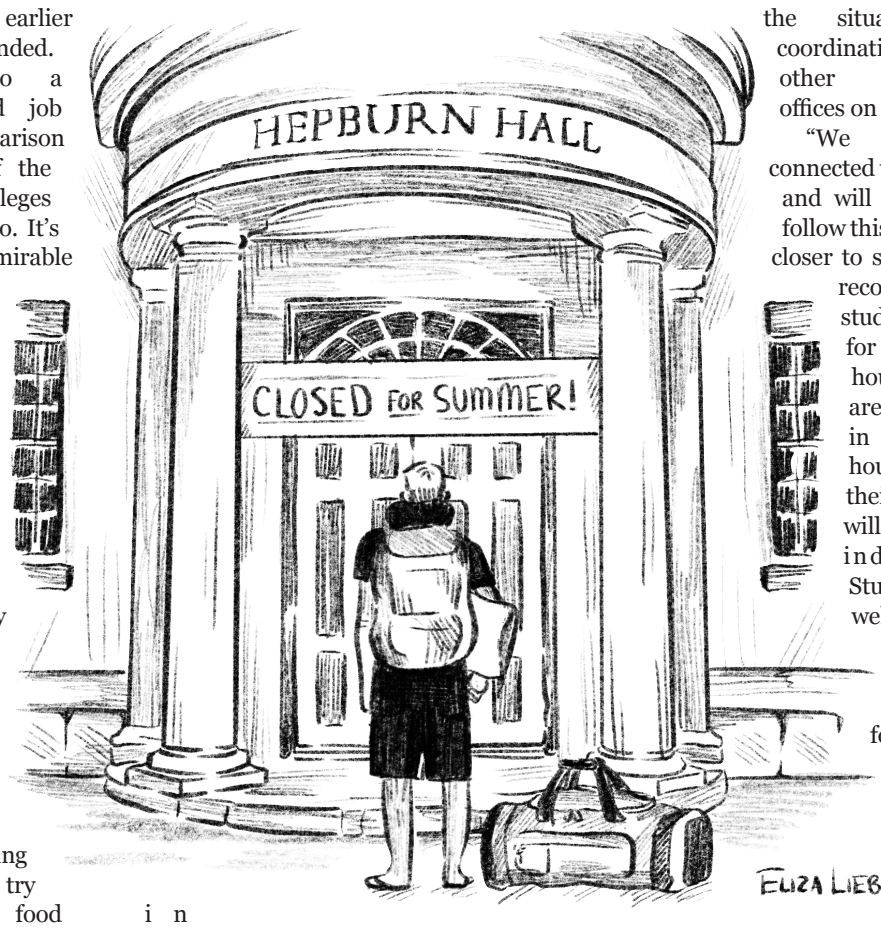
"I think there's definitely a lot of opportunity. It's just that you have to compete for it. That's kind of the friction of it, I guess. There's not much, per se, help with what you have to do and all that, so that you can guarantee housing. There's not much of a stable path for you to take," the student explained.

Karen Bartlett, Associate Director of International Admissions, explained that part of the bottleneck effect contributing to the scarcity of summer employment at the college is due to restrictions on F-1 visas.

"Their F-1 visa dictates that they're not allowed to work off campus. So then they're in a situation where they definitely need to stay on campus, and they need to have a job on campus. And as the number of international students staying on campus rises for those reasons, then there's job shortages," Bartlett said.

Bartlett noted that, compared with other colleges and universities that host international students, Middlebury provides greater support and access throughout the breaks of the school year — something that one of the international students mentioned earlier also commended.

"We do a really good job in comparison to some of the other colleges I've talked to. It's really admirable that Middlebury allows students to stay over during breaks. When we close the dining halls, we try to provide food in the dorms or give some money to use at local restaurants or get a meal at Shiretown type of thing," Bartlett noted.



The college continues to provide residential support through its Residential Life (ResLife) team, even if on a smaller level.

"The College is open over the summer, and students have access to campus support, although it's a good opportunity for students to live more independently as well. Our office hires summer Resident Assistants (RAs) that live in the summer housing, host community events, and are available for general questions and support," Associate Dean for Student Life AJ Place wrote in an email to The Campus.

One international student expressed a desire for the college to prioritize international students in accepting job applications for their summer employment opportunities.

"I think they [Middlebury] should probably prioritize students who have reasons why they are actually staying here — not just because they want to stay here and get experience, but that have other burdens and they can't go back home or like they have nowhere else to go," the student said.

Interim Executive Director of ISSS Jess Schlotfeldt commented that the school is aware of the potential issues and that the office has spoken with international students who may be facing a lack of support over the summer. She explained that ISSS is monitoring the situation and coordinating with other residential offices on campus.

"We have connected with ResLife and will continue to follow this as we come closer to summer. We recommend that students apply for summer housing if they are interested in campus housing, and their situation will be reviewed individually. Students are welcome to connect with ResLife for individual questions, and we encourage international students to seek out College employment, research, or an internship through CCI," Schlotfeldt wrote in an email to The Campus.

Over the summer, the college transfers control of most of its housing and academic facilities to the Language Schools.

"Living on campus in the summer is different from what students are used to during the academic year. Language School students are actively enrolled in classes and are required to live on campus, so they have priority for campus space. Summer housing for student workers is a privilege, and it is important students understand that the language pledge is in effect and Language School students are meant to be in an immersed experience. English is not allowed in most areas of campus, including the dining hall, library, and any common spaces, including outside," Place added.

One international student who has spent two summers at the college commented that the overcrowding in dorms reserved for summer student workers can lead to unclean, uncomfortable living conditions.

"The kitchens would get so packed, and we're not even allowed to enter some of the dining halls. There's a lot of restrictions, especially around food and housing," the student explained.

"The microwave is not working. The facility, the water is so nasty coming out from the taps. Everyone's sharing two kitchens, kitchens are overbooked. I think there were only two kitchens in Stewart, and there were what, I want to say, like 50 to 60 international students living there. So I think they definitely can do better, but they're just slacking. They're choosing not to do better," the student added.

For the summer of 2026, ResLife has not seen any increase in demand so far and anticipates being able to house all students who request housing.

"We have not seen a significant increase in summer housing requests at this point. We always encourage students to look for on-campus employment, research, or internship opportunities first since those groups have priority for summer housing. After those students are housed, we'll house other students based on availability. While we never know how many students will request summer housing, we have been able to house all students that have requested it over the past few years," Place said.

Editor's note: Managing Editor Yuvraj Shah '26 contributed reporting to this article.

Davis Family Library announces furniture upgrade

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History of Art and Architecture Erin Sassin, who is currently serving as department chair, and visited the student club: The Architecture Table

The library received feedback that students are looking for more collaborative spaces to work.

"We learned from students that they didn't quite understand where they could be noisy or where they needed to be quiet. So we decided to foster spaces that invite students for collaborative work," Irwin added. "Many students told us the little tables are never enough space, so we are adding some table space. They told us how much they liked the booths in Proctor and in Crossroads. We really took that to heart and wanted to accommodate students' needs."

In addition to comfort and functionality, staff emphasized ease of maintenance when selecting new furniture.

"Some of the furniture we're getting is a little bit off the floor, which makes it easy to vacuum underneath. Our custodial staff and library staff often have to move heavy recliners, so we wanted the new chairs to be lighter. Some of them have wheels. Having something that we can reupholster and clean really easily is super important," Marshall said.

Abby Lovshin-Smith, the manager of Office Moves and Furniture Distribution, spoke to The Campus about other qualities of commercial-grade furniture.

"The fabrics are very soft, but they are actually medical grade, so liquids don't seep through them. The foam is firmer because it's being so heavily used. It is more practical to our environment. The furniture tends to be more expensive, but a lot of that is the warranties on it, so if something breaks, I can call our dealer and get it replaced," Lovshin-Smith explained, adding that the price of one cushioned chair tends to be around $5,000.

Lovshin-Smith said that the library also considered environmental concerns while hunting for new furniture.

"Some of the recliners that are in better shape will be moved to other areas, like student lounges. I do love thinking about repurposing furniture, trying to clean it and give it a new life somewhere else. We're thinking about circularity at all times; we're not trying to add to the landfill," Lovshin-Smith said.

Irwin joked that alumni expressed wishes to buy the classic blue recliners.

"At the 10th reunion, alumni suggested we auction off the chairs. They love them because they also sat in them when they were students. It's nostalgic," Irwin said.

The college is working with Vermont-based contract furniture dealer Office Environments, which will also provide furniture for the newly renovated Ilsley Library in town and has previously worked with the University of Vermont and St Michael's College.

Marshall shared her insight on the different areas in the library.

"All students are different. We have students that love to study in the busy café, and some that like it quiet in the East Reading Room. So I like to think that the Library has a little something for every type of studying. I think people will really love the new furniture too. It will be nice and comfortable," Marshall said.

The updated layout will include four-person booths, smaller two-person booths, new chairs, round tables and larger tables designed for collaborative work.

Lovshin-Smith said that the new furniture is expected to be placed in the library on July 1, 2026

TOURIST SEASON BEGINS AT UVM'S MORGAN HORSE FARM

By PHOEBE ADLER
Staff Writer

The University of Vermont's (UVM) Morgan Horse Farm will commence its 2026 tourist season on May 2, which will run until October 27. The farm is dedicated to preserving and promoting the Morgan horse breed as well as providing hands-on educational experiences to students and the general public.

The farm has preserved the same herd of Morgan horses since its establishment in 1878. Originally a privately owned farm commissioned by Colonel Joseph Battell, it became the U.S. Government Morgan Farm in 1907 before UVM became its steward in 1951. Operating under the leadership of Director Margot Smithson, the farm has prospered for over 100 years, making it the world's oldest Morgan horse breeding program.

With over 40 Morgan horses living there today, the farm serves as a teaching facility for both students and the broader public. The Morgan Horse Farm offers an apprenticeship program for UVM students, in which students live on the premises for a year and gain hands-on experience caring for a breeding herd similar in size to the Morgans' herd.

Additionally, the farm offers an internship program for students at institutions other than UVM who wish to learn about Equine Sciences and Management.

Margot Smithson explained that the Morgan Horse Farm currently operates as an active breeding and training farm, offering numerous learning opportunities for interested students and providing educational opportunities for visitors.

"We breed anywhere between five to 10 mares a year. What that looks like from an educational standpoint is each apprentice and intern, if we have someone who's interested in reproduction, will come and monitor the brood mare and take her through her gestation and what's required for that... It's great the apprentices each kind of get assigned a brood mare, and they kind of are the one, the point person, for that mare as they go through," Smithson said in an interview with the Campus.

Smithson also explained the process of raising and eventually selling some of the horses once they are old enough.

"We take the natural talents and attributes of each foal and mash them up with a partner that's going to take them in the direction that they're best suited for out in the world... that's the main point of our mission, is to preserve and promote the Morgan horse. And so part of that is breeding them as sales horses for people to go and find their own Morgan partner to do cool stuff with," she said.

Much of the Morgan Horse Farm's mission today has developed as a result of the efforts of the farm's original owner, Colonel Joseph Battell, who deeply admired the Morgan horse breed. During his life, he maintained them at what was known as the Weybridge Stock Farm and helped save the breed from extinction.

"Joseph Battell thought Morgan horses were the best driving horses at the time," Smithson said. "He just dedicated himself to breeding them, and to establishing his farm out in Weybridge."

As for the Morgan breed, they hold a rich history dating back to the early days of the United States.

"There's a Marguerite Henry book called 'Justin Morgan Had a Horse,' and the breed originated from one foundation sire who had very, very strong genetics," Smithson said. "That horse was later called Justin Morgan, or the Morgan horse, after his owner. And he kind of created, through his really strong genes, this type of horse that was called the Morgan horse, and it was bred widely in Vermont and New England, and was the central pioneer horse. She also shared that the Morgan horse breed was bred to be substantive with a lot of muscle and bone, capable of aiding people in various types of difficult labor. Smithson described the Morgan as on the border of a pony and a horse, stating that it was popular in Vermont due to its small size and strength.

COURTESY PHOTO / MORGAN HORSE FARM

With over 40 Morgan horses living there today, UVM's Morgan Horse Farm serves as a teaching facility for both students and the general public

The aligned development of the Morgan horse breed and the United States is particularly striking, making the breed a quintessentially New England – and in particular, Vermont – horse, as Smithson explained.

"The figure was born in 1789, which is the same year that the US Constitution was ratified, so the breed is connected to the early days of the United States and definitely New England, especially Vermont. And that's why the Morgan horse is the state animal of Vermont; because of its history and because of the legacy of the Morgan Horse Farm."

Formal tours of the Morgan Horse Farm have existed since about the 1970s, although Smithson mentioned that before then, members of the public often came to see the horses.

"During the USDA's tenure of the farm, they would do applied agricultural research and demonstrations. So there was always a history of people coming and seeing the Morgans at the farm. They would hold 4 each day, a couple times a year, and they would show off the breeding stock," she said.

Formal tours of the farm began to be offered once UVM took over the property, and demand for agrotourism rose. Much of the touring experience has remained the same, Smithson explained, with only minimal changes.

"Over time, we've kept it going. A lot of it's the same, honestly, as it was back then. And then we've made a lot of improvements as well, as well to the guest experience, but the heart of it is the same, which is teaching about Morgans and their connection to Vermont," she said.

Additionally, Smithson emphasized the importance of educating visitors on the environmental impact of the farm and the work that is done in operating it.

"What I want to continue to involve in the story of the farm is how we manage the entire facility," Smithson said. We have 200 acres, and so how are we being a good steward of the land and the forest ecosystem, and how does that integrate with the horses? Because it's not just about pretty Morgans. It's about how are we taking care of the land that supports the horses? And so, I want people to have an understanding of that larger system and how important that is to protect and take care of our agricultural programs."

ECOREPS LEADS SALAMANDER CROSSING EVENT IN AN EFFORT TO PROTECT LOCAL WILDLIFE

By KATRINA SCHWARZ & ANNA DOUCET
Senior Local Editor & Staff Writer

On Monday, April 13, more than 25 students braved a damp Vermont evening to help salamanders safely cross the road. Donning jackets and mud boots, participants searched the underbrush for salamanders, frogs and other amphibians, carefully guiding them across Morgan Road in Salisbury.

Each spring, salamanders across Vermont undertake a perilous migration from their wintering grounds to breeding wetlands. The journey typically occurs between March and late April, when temperatures are above 40 degrees Fahrenheit, and rainfall softens the ground. But for many amphibians, the route is deadly: crossing roadways often results in high mortality.

To address this issue, Middlebury EcoReps organized a two-hour salamander crossing event, inviting students in an email titled "Salamander Crossing!!!!!!!" to assist local wildlife. Participants traveled by van and car to an area known for high salamander activity, where forest lines both sides of a half-mile dirt road — a common migration corridor.

"Every spring, in March and April, there are salamanders that cross over to wetlands, and over 50% of them die because they cross the road and get hit by cars," Eleanor Harrison '26, assistant director of EcoReps, said. "So we hosted a salamander crossing event where you move them across the road so that they don't get hit by cars.

Cassie Pfitzenmayer '26, an intern with EcoReps, emphasized the ecological importance of the location and timing.

"As it gets warmer and rains more, amphibians move across roads toward water. Because it's dark and rainy, drivers often can't see them, and many get killed. We help guide them in a way safely from one side to the other," Pfitzenmayer said.

EcoReps is a student-led organization that falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Sustainability and Environmental Affairs, which aims to connect Middlebury students to the world of environmental consciousness and sustainability. The group hosts events that support this goal throughout the year, including movie nights, holiday celebrations, baking sessions and more. This past fall, they helped host a block party, providing refreshments and featuring several popular student bands in partnership with the Solar House.

"EcoReps is completely student-run, and we collaborate with Environmental Affairs to run events for the Middlebury community, both on campus and externally," Pfitzenmayer said. "The goal is to meet students where they are through fun, friendly events done sustainably and inspiring people to practice sustainability and participate in climate action."

COURTESY PHOTO / ELEANOR HARRISON

Students gather after participating in EcoRep's salamander crossing event.

Beyond environmental impact, the event also fostered community. Harrison noted that the turnout exceeded expectations and brought together a wide range of students.

"We had a pretty good turnout," Harrison said. "I got to chat with underclassmen and other people I usually wouldn't get to talk to, so that was fun."

For some participants, the experience had been long anticipated. Bernadette Osborne '26.5 described the event as a personal milestone.

"I'm a senior Feb, and attending a salamander crossing has been on my bucket list since I first heard of it Freshman year," Osborne said. "I have wanted to learn more about how I can protect them, which I definitely got to do!"

Looking ahead, EcoReps plans to host additional events this spring, including community circles, Earth Day programming and an international food festival aimed at fostering sustainability through cultural exchange.

For those interested in helping salamanders independently, warm and rainy evenings near wetlands offer the best opportunity. More broadly, the Otter Creek chapter of the Vermont Audubon Society hosts events to assist amphibian migration. And for drivers on Vermont's backroads after dark, slowing down and staying alert can make a critical difference.

Editor's Note: Editor in Chief Mandy Berghela '26 helped contribute reporting to this article.

HOW VERMONT GREEN FC BECAME A SUMMER SOCCER PHENOMENON

By DYLAN MCGINTY
Staff Writer

Vermont Green Football Club, a pre-professional soccer team founded in 2022 by Matthew Wolff and Patrick Infurna, will open its 2026 season this May following a landmark year for the organization.

Created with the goal of establishing a grassroots soccer club rooted in Vermont, the team competes each summer at the University of Vermont's (UVM) Virtue Field, where it regularly draws sellout crowds.

The club has quickly emerged as a force in USL League Two. In 2025, Vermont Green won the 144-team league championship and qualified for the Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup, the oldest soccer tournament in the United States.

As a pre-professional team, Vermont Green's roster is largely composed of Division I college players who compete during the summer to maintain and develop their skills. Several alumni have gone on to sign professional contracts in the United States, Canada and Europe.

From its inception, the club prioritized experienced leadership to guide its growth. Sporting director Adam Pfeifer, a former Boston College player and longtime college coach, has played a central role in recruiting talent through his extensive network.

As the club's profile has grown, so has its ability to attract top players.

"We've been able to build our pedigree and convince top players that this is the place you want to go," Infurna said in an interview with The Campus.

Two Middlebury students and members of the men's varsity soccer team, Leon Brody '28 and Will Sawin '27, were members of Vermont Green's roster for the 2025 season. Alex Elias '08, the head coach of the Middlebury varsity soccer team, also served as an assistant coach at Vermont Green last season.

"It was an unreal experience playing with some of the best college players in the nation and in front of the best fans in USL2. All three owners, Pat, Sam, and Matt, are amazing, down-to-earth people with a deep passion for football, Vermont, and the club's social justice values. Between them, the coaching staff (led by Chris Taylor), the fans, and the players, Vermont has become a hotbed for American soccer," Sawin said.

This summer, Vermont Green will employ five interns from the college to help facilitate the club's home games and manage its sustainability commitments.

The club is especially proud of its sustainability mission, which is defined as one of the core values of the organization. In order to achieve their environmentally conscious goals, they source all their club apparel from British eco-friendly sportswear brand PlayerLayer; they also report their emissions through Science Based Targets initiative-backed tracking. On game days, the club organizers often take a half-time break to explain the club's broader mission to the audience and promote partner organizations.

COURTESY PHOTO / VERMONT GREEN

Vermont Green's roots are evident in scenes from last season's games.

"Our values are aligned with those of Vermonters, and I think that's been a big reason we've gotten so much support from the community," Infurna said. "We want it to be as authentically Vermont as possible."

Additionally, as the team is located in Burlington, it aims to root itself in Vermont through extensive partnerships with local businesses.

"People are coming up early, they're getting the free Ben and Jerry's, they're speaking to the nonprofits, they're getting local food vendors, and they're making their way over to the stands and hopefully watching some good soccer," Infurna shared.

Infurna, who grew up in Castleton, previously worked at Copa90, a British soccer media corporation. At Copa90, he worked on documentaries about soccer clubs around the world, aiming to showcase the passion for the sport in these communities. In one series, he helped cover the origin stories of globally recognized players such as Lionel Messi and Kevin De Bruyne by going to their hometowns and interviewing locals.

"We would go to Argentina and talk to Messi's first-grade teacher," Infurna said. "This was really great to get a sense of what it means to love this game, especially in off-the-beaten-path, small town stories."

This experience later informed his decision-making process in crafting a club centered around Vermont and its people.

"We wanted to create a club (in Vermont) that means more," Infurna said, drawing on his previous experience to envision the plan for Vermont Green.

Matthew Wolff, Vermont Green's other cofounder, previously worked as a graphic designer for Nike. Wolff designed the club's crest with sustainability and the natural environment in mind, aiming to capture the club's core ethos.

One of the main obstacles the club faces is the limitations of their infrastructure—currently playing at the University of Vermont's (UVM) facilities, the venue's 2,500-person capacity has proven to fall short of demand. Infurna spoke optimistically of future plans to build a new venue, complete with expanded training facilities.

"Hopefully some day, we can build a stadium somewhere around here. It could be a municipal project, or a collective one," Infurna said. "Being in Vermont, we do have some limitations on venues—it's harder to host big events here."

The 2026 season will mark the first season for the Vermont Green FC women's team, which will double the club's size and the number of games played. The season starts with an away game to Seacoast United, a team in Epping, New Hampshire, on May 16.

"With the World Cup in the U.S., this is an exciting time for the game both nationally and specifically in Vermont, which has shown massive interest. In my opinion, the sky is the limit for Vermont Green," Infurna said.

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BLURRING THE LINE BETWEEN CAMPUS AND TOWN

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

It is a cold Saturday afternoon in January, and Middlebury's ice hockey team faces off against its fierce NESCAC competitors. The arena is full of excitement and tension. Fans wear oversized hockey jerseys, clutching hot dogs in one hand and blue-and-white pom-poms in the other, as they root for the home team. Vermont does not have any professional sports teams, so, naturally, Middlebury hockey becomes "the team" for many Addison County residents. When scanning Kenyon Arena on a typical game day, a large portion of the stands consists of local residents. This camaraderie encapsulates the mutually sustaining relationship between students and town residents in Middlebury. The borders of college property and the surrounding town are permeable, with both parties having an undeniable impact on one another.

In many ways, the town of Middlebury relies on the college and its students. For one, the college attracts people and customers to the town, providing the main consumer base for local businesses. In addition to the student population itself, events such as NCAA tournaments, graduation and move-in day bring more people to the town. Many local business owners strategically base their business models and marketing strategies on campus demand.

At the same time, the town is a central facet of the Middlebury experience. Many students have developed a deep affection for the town and its people. Less than a 10-minute walk away, it is easy to create these intimate connections with places outside of school. For many, this can mean nestling in their favorite corner of Haymaker, reading a book and looking out at the river and mountains. For others, it means joining the Thursday night line-dancing lessons at Woodchuck Cider House, where students and locals bond over shared interests. These forums and spaces provide opportunities to interact meaningfully with people off campus.

Many programs directly facilitate the integration of the town and the campus, further blurring the boundaries between them. Community Friends, for example, is a mentoring program that matches students with children ages six to 12 in Addison County. It becomes a normal part of the day to see elementary school kids getting soft serve in the dining hall or playing on Battell Beach. Middlebury students provide child care for local families, as the kids seamlessly become a part of campus life for many. In addition to bringing the community to campus, the Friends of International Students (FIS) Host Program does the reverse: it matches international students with families in the area. This is a valuable outlet and provides stable support networks for those who are far from home.

The Center for Community Engagement (CCE) advises many of these student organizations, and the Board commends the CCE for its role in facilitating student involvement in town. The CCE collaborates with student organizations and is open to anyone interested in connecting with the broader community. The Page One Literacy Project is a prime example of the work at the CCE. Groups of student volunteers travel to elementary schools in Addison County to promote literacy and instill a love of reading in future generations.

Despite this unique community bond and exchanges, there are strains on this relationship. Many of these tensions arise from a power imbalance between the town and Middlebury. Undeniably, the college holds significant economic power over the town, directly impacting residents' livelihoods. For instance, the college is the largest employer in Addison County. Given the college's economic scope, it has responsibilities to the town. The 254-unit housing project, Stonecrop Meadows, is an example of a college-led initiative to address the affordable housing crisis in Addison County and beyond. Although this is a step in the right direction, it has by no means eliminated the issue.

There remains a pervasive disconnect, specifically between the college and its employees. The economic vitality of the college is a double-edged sword, funding initiatives like Stonecrop Meadows, an affordable housing unit, while simultaneously inflating the cost of living in town. Many college employees cannot afford to live in Middlebury or its surrounding areas and must commute for hours each way. This is only worsened by the antics of Middlebury students and families. For example, families buying houses in town and renting them out as Airbnbs for the duration of their child's education reduce the town's affordability. Although this could be an inherent problem of wealth and income inequality, the college should mitigate this impact by allocating funds to initiatives similar to Stonecrop Meadows. The college should also support projects that are less glamorous or media-strategic by focusing on improving residents' quality of life.

Additionally, there needs to be a greater acknowledgement of the town by Middlebury students. There should not be a sense of entitlement over the town during these four years. The mindset that the town is "ours" and for "our" use only sets a dangerous precedent and requires reconstruction. This is a reminder that the town is not a playground, and students should not be disrespectful or disruptive to residents. Ironically, many students will leave Vermont behind following graduation. There needs to be stronger recognition that this is many people's permanent home, while also giving it more credit for everything it provides.

Even though your time at Middlebury and Vermont might be temporary, do not treat it as just passing through. There is no Middlebury College without the town and the people who make it up; we are "the town's college" after all. It is almost impossible to tell where the campus finishes and the town starts. Exploring a local business, attending a local event or striking up a conversation with someone new enriches the overall "Middlebury experience".

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: COMBATTING GRADE INFLATION REQUIRES A CAMPUS-WIDE APPROACH

Op-Ed

***Gabriella Gerig** is the Editorial Board Director and a member of the class of 2027.*

I appreciate the concern over grade inflation, as it is a problem that supersedes the borders of Middlebury and pervades many higher education institutions across the nation. According to Jane Nam in BestColleges, the median college GPA increased by 21.5% over 30 years. Grade inflation is an issue, limiting the potential for meaningful academic achievement. However, this new policy is taking the wrong approach to an important issue.

In a utopian world of higher education, grades would not matter. Students would pursue academic excellence for the intrinsic worth of knowledge and scholastic exploration. However, this is a utopia, and although it conveys an idealistic sentiment, it is often not indicative of reality. At the end of the day, as much as we hate to admit, grades are important. Whether a student is applying to graduate school or entering a rigorous finance recruitment process, GPA is a crucial indicator and screening tool for both admissions and employers.

This policy change has the potential to hurt Economics students entering the job market. People reviewing a student's resume will not know that the student's grades are deflated, putting them at a disadvantage compared to peers at institutions where grade inflation still exists.

Although there is merit in this policy change, it is limited and undermined by its scope. If Middlebury wants to fight grade inflation, it needs to take a more comprehensive approach. Harvard, for example, has proposed to limit the letter grade A to 20% of the grades in a course, with the discretion of four additional A's. This would impact every course, not just a select few. A campus-wide change, rather than targeting a specific demographic, is the only way to enact effective change that does not penalize certain students. Middlebury needs to become an institution nationally recognized for its deflation efforts in order to reap the benefits of revitalizing an A-grade merit while simultaneously not putting its students at a disadvantage.

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IT'S YOUR PLANET TOO

Op-Ed

The SGA Environmental Sustainability Committee.

Insurance companies have begun to pull out of entire states. Homeowners in Florida, Louisiana and California have found themselves uninsurable through no fault of their own. Climate-related disasters meant that the actuarial math no longer worked, and the people pricing this risk were not environmental scientists, but insurance analysts and financial modelers — people who might be sitting next to you in Econ class.

We, the members of the Student Government Association (SGA) Environmental Sustainability Committee, want to challenge the assumption that sustainability belongs to one corner of campus. Sustainability is not a specialty: It is the defining context of the world we will be adults in.

We understand that our curriculum is already demanding, the job market is already stressful, and environmentalism can feel like another obligation. It is easy to pay lip service to environmental concerns without feeling like they are directly relevant to what we want to do with our lives. The problem, we believe, is not that students in non-climate-related majors don't care about climate change. The problem is that nobody has connected the dots in a way that made it feel real. So, let us try for a moment.

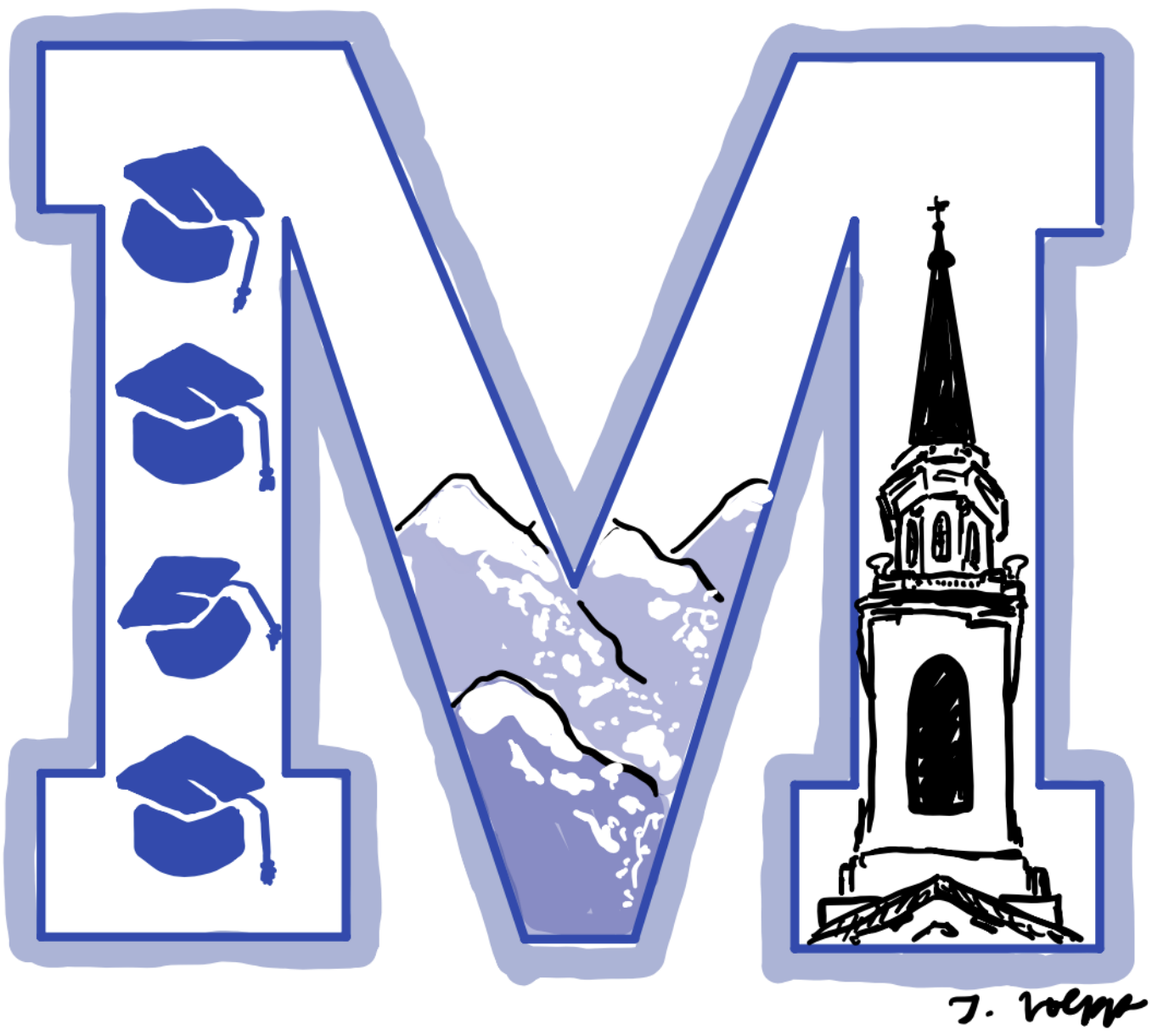
Global demand for green skills has increased by 40% since 2015, but only 13% of the global workforce currently possesses the skills needed to meet that demand. In the United States alone, there were more than four million climate-related jobs in 2024, with clean energy job creation outpacing overall U.S. job growth more than threefold. Rather than a sector unto itself, this represents a transformation spread across existing industries. According to EU-funded research, employers in more than 80% of countries anticipate that climate adaptation and mitigation will transform their businesses within the next five years. Advanced manufacturing is decarbonizing, agriculture is reckoning with drought and soil loss, and finance is working to price climate risk into everything from mortgages to municipal bonds, just to name a few sectors. A report by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that a 1° C increase in global temperature reduces world GDP by 12%. This statistic is an environmental statistic, but also an economic, public health and political science statistic.

What frustrates us is the tendency to treat this as a problem for one department to solve. Environmental Studies courses at Middlebury are excellent and prepare students well for careers that directly address environmental challenges. They cannot prepare students who will never take a course that begins with ENVS A. A liberal arts education is supposed to do the opposite of siloing: we are supposed to graduate with the ability to think across disciplines and see how history, economics, ethics, and ecology are all talking to each other at once. The climate crisis is the perfect subject for this kind of thinking. It is a scientific problem that cannot be solved without policy, a policy problem that cannot be solved without public will and a question of public will that cannot be answered without education.

Our ask is not that every Midd student becomes an environmental scientist. In fact, several members of our committee are pursuing majors which don't require us to set foot in BiHall for the entire duration of our college career. It is essential that every student encounters the environmental dimensions of the field they are entering. A law student who understands climate liability will be a more effective attorney. A computer science student who understands the carbon footprint of data centers will build more responsibility. A medical student who understands how rising temperatures affect patients will be a more competent clinician. Our education should prepare us not just for our first job, but for the world that we will inhabit over the course of our lives.

Each of us will graduate into a world that has already warmed by more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. This is not intended to fuel climate doomerism — we don't want you to finish this op-ed feeling like the climate crisis is insurmountable, and there's nothing you can do. On the contrary, the fact that this problem is everywhere is also evidence that solutions can and must come from everywhere.

Please reach out to the Student Government Environmental Sustainability Committee if you want to help us change the cultural apathy towards the climate crisis: sgaes@middlebury.edu, or if you have suggestions for how sustainability can be more meaningfully integrated into your academic experience.



THE POTENT POWER OF SGA

Op-Ed

***Jonny Eaton** is a member of the class of 2026.5.*

The Middlebury College Student Government Association (SGA) has long struggled with growing student apathy. Most students view it as a performative body utilized by ambitious students to puff up their resumes rather than a vital community organ. This past year, very few students followed public SGA meetings, let alone held elected students accountable for their election promises. Senate and General Assembly meetings went uncovered by The Campus; Senate candidates ran unopposed; committees struggled to fill seats, if they formed at all, and sometimes even committee directors and senators quit SGA obligations mid-semester. This year, disengagement has reached a new low, which begs the question: What is SGA even for?

All students pay an activity fee of around $500 in addition to their tuition, room and board, which gets distributed by the SGA finance committee. Every student is represented by two senators from their class and the student body president, whom they get to elect. The SGA is the voice of the student body of Middlebury to the administration and oversees lobbying for changes on issues that impact students. They are also responsible for selecting students to serve on student councils, joint student/faculty councils, and trustee councils and committees, overseeing the allocation of over $50,000 worth of student activity fees to student organizations, social houses and clubs. SGA members put together class dinners, host Midd Kid Night, and promote resources alongside campus partners such as Fresh Check Day. The SGA does not lack influence over key decisions made by the college administration; it's just that too few students have stepped up to the plate.

In recent Middlebury history, student vision in the SGA has transformed access to campus resources, late-night food and even graduation credit requirements. In 2018, the SGA senate envisioned the beloved 10 O'Clock Ross program as an after-hours student-run cafe for studying, free late-night food and late-night hangouts. Likewise, in spring 2023, SGA president Raymond Diaz '23 envisioned a universally financially accessible Middlebury experience. As part of his legacy, Diaz worked with the SGA Senate and the Office of Advancement to create an endowment for student opportunity, funded by the remaining funds in the SGA finance operating budget that clubs returned at the end of the 2023 school year. Going forward, the Student Access and Support fund (SAS) grows every spring. On a separate note, between 2023 and 2024, cooperation across Abed Abbas' and B-Striker's teams lowered graduation credit from 36 to 34.

On a smaller scale, the SGA has helped adjust dining hall hours to match class schedules, extended gym hours, raised the declining balance from $25 to $30, encouraged more vegetarian and vegan options in the dining hall, made carabiners more accessible from all dining halls and put up curtains in Crossroads.

This week is SGA election season, and the deadline to get signatures to run for President or the Senate is approaching quickly. Now is the time to think about what you could do for Middlebury and to evaluate the SGA election candidates. In 10 years, Middlebury will be shaped by those who stepped up to the plate. If not SGA, become a role model on your team, in your club, in the classroom or in your hall. Make your Middlebury time count.

The Middlebury Campus

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WATCHING THE WINGS GROW: PROC KNITTER MARIN MELCHIOR

By ZHAN (COCO) ZHU
Contributing Writer

Marin Melchior wears the standard college dining services uniform, but beneath the regulation fabric, the markers of a creator remain: a streak of vibrant blue bleached into her hair, a pair of delicate earrings and a blue bow pinned neatly behind her work hat. As the dining servery supervisor at Middlebury College's Proctor Dining Hall, she manages the daily ebb and flow of student life; yet, beyond the campus counters, she is the founder of her own knitting company.

If you introduce her that way, she will laugh — not a polite chuckle, but a deep, head-thrown-back laugh, as if she just heard a great joke. When the laughter settles, her eyes remain bright. "I just love people," Melchior said. It is not a slogan; it is the philosophy she lives by every day at her post.

Melchior's most striking quality is her observation of others. From her desk, she once noticed a boy with a smile so radiant it could brighten an entire room. One day, she saw that smile fade — the subtle change in the curve of his mouth, the light vanishing from his eyes. She didn't intervene immediately, but she held that observation until she could ask him about it the following day. She watches a girl who moves like an elf, carrying what Melchior calls a "box of happiness," weaving between tables to spread joy. Melchior discerns whether a smile is genuine and notes how a person has changed since the day before. Though her own life has not been easy, she remains a steadfast observer of the world.

This sensitivity eventually flows into her art. Melchior is a designer whose knitting patterns are recognized globally. Her most famous work, "Butterfly Shawl," is vibrant, intricate and widely celebrated. As a pattern designer, she translates inspiration into a seamless language, drafting every stitch into a detailed written pattern. These digital patterns have achieved significant international success, with her original designs selling over 30,000 copies.

When she created "Butterfly," there was no grand plan. "Butterfly is a good name," she reflected, alluding to the process of metamorphosis. Later, while preparing for an exhibition, she found an old landscape painting she had done years ago, depicting waves crashing against the shore. The patterns and colors of that painting overlapped almost perfectly with the "Butterfly" design. She had been painting waves while knitting butterflies without even knowing it. She does not intend to stop there; she wants to make her work more realistic — closer to the true veins of a wing — while simultaneously making it bolder.

This pursuit of beauty is her way of countering the rough edges of reality. "The texture of the work I create is the exact opposite of my own life," she explained. Wool is soft, bright and warm; her life has often been difficult.

Now in her 50s, Melchior's resume is a testament to varied labors. She has been a forklift driver — she gestured, pushing upward into the air — and has worked in the fashion industry and on farms. She spent more than 20 years in California, a massive chapter of her journey, before returning to Middlebury. Here, her less visible tasks — maintaining cleanliness, stocking supplies and monitoring food safety — constitute her daily routine.

She admits her path has been rocky. "But I like smooth and orderly presentations," she said. Life can be rough, but the work does not have to be. Her aesthetic leans toward things that are "noisy, busy and full of layers" — not chaos, but abundance. She dislikes anything "wobbly" or unstable. "When a thing is fully developed and not interrupted by strange textures — that's good," she said.

Much of what Melchior creates are gifts — expressions of love handed directly to friends. She often names her designs after them. "When you get older, you put your love for that person into something," she said softly. Her portfolio is, essentially, a registry of the people she has loved.

Melchior notes that she found it easier to adapt to others when she was younger. "Now I just get things done." She no longer performs happiness for others. She says she is quite happy now, a statement delivered with quiet certainty.

She also shares a truth few creators admit: "When I'm happy, I'm more likely to take good photos and see beautiful things." Sometimes her mind wants to create, but her body refuses. She will pick up her needles, look at the yarn and know it isn't the right day. "I tell myself: try again tomorrow," she said.

STAFF PHOTO / ZHAN (COCO) ZHU

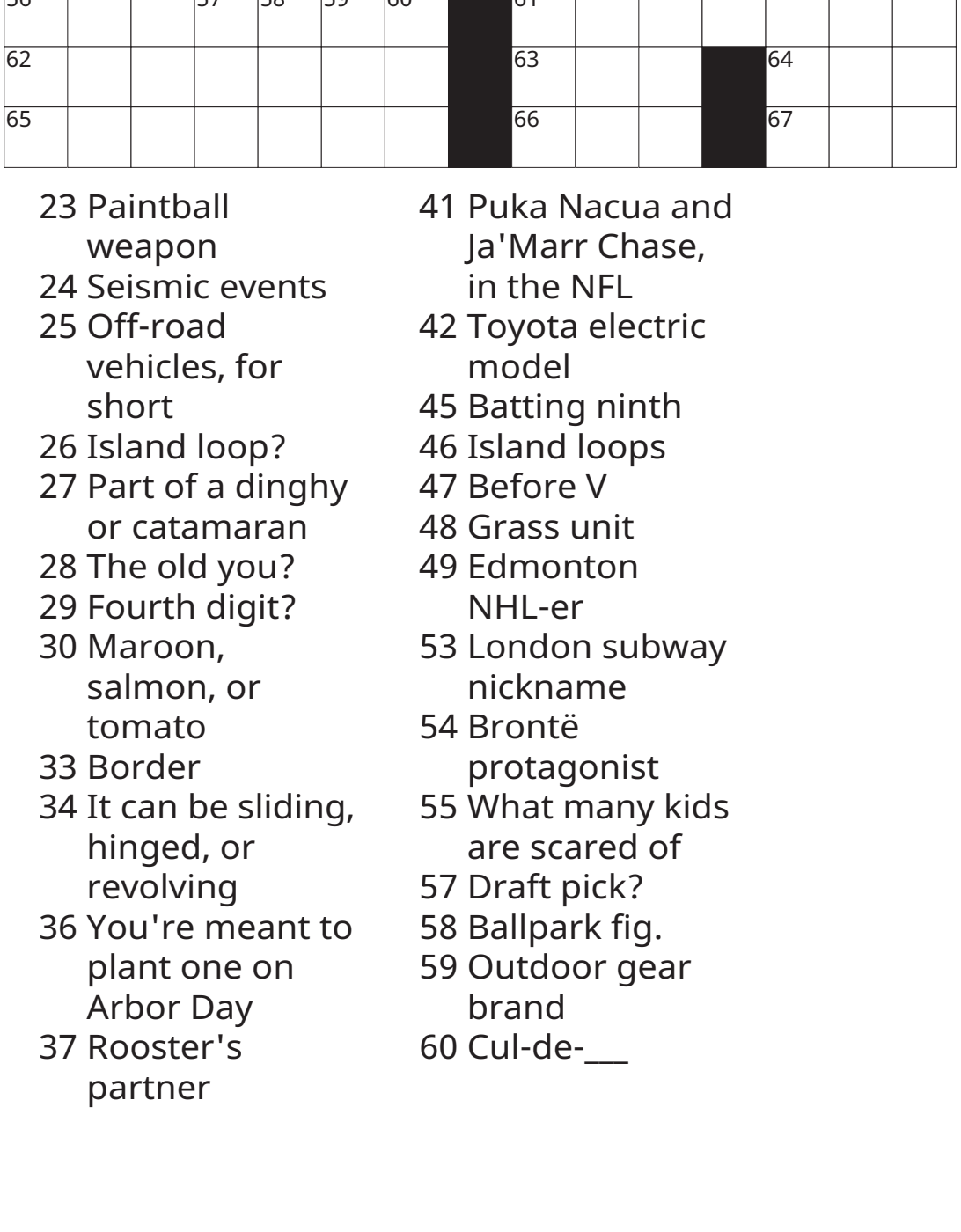
1. Marin's butterfly shawls and her painting.
2. Portrait of Marin, shot on the lawn in front of Proctor.

At this stage of her life, Melchior is still exploring and thinking about how to do better. She returns to the name "Butterfly," and is reminded of the act of breaking out of a cocoon. The implication is clear: she is still growing, too. She looks at you with bright eyes, and you realize she truly does love the boy with the fading smile, the girl with the box of happiness, the softness of wool and the act of breaking out itself.

She stands up, heading back into the world of steam and noise. She puts on her work clothes, ready to handle the next supply shortage. The wool is waiting at home, and "Butterfly" is waiting at the tips of her needles. But first, Marin Melchior returns to her desk at Proctor. She sits there, watching students swipe their ID cards, looking up and truly seeing everyone.

Data Query

Egan Turner



ACROSS
1 Not high
4 "Abbott Elementary" network
7 New BiHall space, and a hint to 27-Across, 44-Across, 6-Down, and 24-Down
14 "So annoying!"
15 Sticky substance
16 Foot phalange
17 Complete, as a sale
19 Dire ___
20 Affirmative response
21 Marvel Stan?
22 Go back on a promise
25 Vigilant (and my starting "Wordle" word!)
27 Two violinists, a violist, and a cellist
31 Tuna type
32 Not corrected
35 Charged particle
36 Most common English word
38 They are worth 6 points in the NFL
39 Tokyo's old name
40 Tool often found in a trunk
43 Previously
44 Vibrant neighborhood of New Orleans
48 Idaho's capital
50 Spews lava
51 ___-Manuel Miranda
52 Given a share
56 North African capital
61 "Get Out" actor Daniel
62 Scuba diving domain
63 Subj. for some immigrants
64 "I'm freezing!"
65 Difficult to predict
66 GPS lines
67 "I'm scared!"

DOWN
1 "Boygenius" artist Dacus
2 Stare creepily
3 Townspeople in "The Grinch"
4 When many start fifth grade
5 Sound of disapproval
6 Result of a preceding action
7 Ice cream amts.
8 Foldable bed
9 Suffix for chariot, puppet, or profit
10 Org. with Magic and Wizards
11 It's often left up by men
12 Computer key
13 Stopwatch button
18 Virtual assistant
23 Paintball weapon
24 Seismic events
25 Off-road vehicles, for short
26 Island loop?
27 Part of a dinghy or catamaran
28 The old you?
29 Fourth digit?
30 Maroon, salmon, or tomato
33 Border
34 It can be sliding, hinged, or revolving
36 You're meant to plant one on Arbor Day
37 Rooster's partner
41 Puka Nacua and Ja'Marr Chase, in the NFL
42 Toyota electric model
45 Batting ninth
46 Island loops
47 Before V
48 Grass unit
49 Edmonton NHL-er
53 London subway nickname
54 Brontë protagonist
55 What many kids are scared of
57 Draft pick?
58 Ballpark fig.
59 Outdoor gear brand
60 Cul-de-___

‘A HALL OF MIRRORS’: LAYERS OF PERFORMANCE IN ‘THE MAIDS’

By RACHELLE TALBERT
News Editor

In a mirror maze of performativity, reality blends into fantasy until the two become nearly indistinguishable. This is on full display in Jean Genet’s absurdist play, “The Maids,” which was produced by the Middlebury Theatre Department this past weekend. It depicts two sister maids engaging in dramatic role-playing scenes while serving the larger-than-life Madame. Directed by Professor of Theater Cláudio Medeiros ’90, the production ran from April 9–11, and served as the senior acting work of Ryan Ulen ’26 (Claire) and Zeph Santiago ’26.5 (Solange), as well as senior work in costume design for Juli Valle ’26.

The play opens with one of the sister maids, Solange, running her face against the fabric of dozens of dresses, regarding herself in the reflection of a hand mirror. The mirror contained a hidden camera, projecting a live feed of her reflection onto a screen for the audience.

“We were looking for ways to make this play resonant for students, and we were thinking about social media and portraying somebody that you were not or idolizing somebody or wanting to be somebody,” Medeiros said. “The question was how to integrate that into the dramaturgy in a way that would make sense, and it wouldn’t feel like we were adding technology in a gratuitous way.”

The production included three cameras: two mounted on the walls and one an iPhone hidden inside the hand mirror. The group was opposed to simply using an iPhone, so the show’s sound designer, Stefan Arnarson, who is also the associate technical director at the Town Hall Theater, suggested hiding it in a mirror.

Claire roleplays as Madame and Solange as herself, kowtowing to Madame before pretending to strangle her to death. When they finish roleplaying, we learn that the two are equals as maids and sisters, despite their struggle for power with one another. They both reflect — united by their status and mixed up by Madame — and contrast with each other. Solange, the older sister, harbours bitterness towards Madame and rejects their status. She acts occasionally as a stabilizing force for Claire, who vacillates between intense power, lust and adoration.

“Claire is a shy, timid, and beautiful woman who aspires to public acclaim, glory and recognition. She wants to be in control, as much as she is controlled by her older sister. She is obsessed with the beauty, sweetness and goodwill of her Madame, and through roleplaying as her, she believes she can become her.” Ulen wrote in an email to The Campus.

“The dynamic between Solange and Claire was far beyond any normal sisterly bond. Solange and Claire are all that they have; they have no choice but to be extremely close: there are no secrets, privacy or space between the two, for better or for worse,” Santiago wrote in an email to The Campus.

Both characters are constantly dwarfed by Madame. Even in her absence for the majority of the play, her wardrobe sprawls across the set.

“Thinking about what Madame would want to have in her closet and how it would be arranged was very important to her character. I’m really happy with how it turned out; it really spoke into what Madame thinks about clothes,” Valle wrote in an email to The Campus. “The set, being a very clean white, allowed for the costumes to pop even more.”

Together, the two maids have sent a report that led to Monsieur, Madame’s lover, being imprisoned. They learn that Monsieur has been released, and plot to murder Madame in fear that they will be caught. When this scheme fails, Claire plays Madame once again and drinks the poisoned chamomile they prepared to kill Madame. Reality and fantasy blend together until, at last, Claire becomes Madame through death.

“It is Claire’s suicide that makes her performance of Madame real — because only when Solange kills her does the game become real,” Ulen wrote.

“When Claire defies Solange or disagrees with her, Solange loses her temper and has several long speeches where she bears down on Claire to remind her of the insults Madame throws at them and the permanence of their lower-class status. These scenes were emotionally taxing to perform, but admittedly, it was also fun to be able to just completely let loose and be angry on stage,” Santiago added.

The playwright, Jean Genet, is well-known for his experimental and avant-garde theater, particularly dealing with structures of power. Abandoned by his mother at birth, Genet grew up in foster care and spent time in prison for theft. His representation of sexuality and class was particularly groundbreaking.

“Genet was writing nearly a century ago in a time where gay men were far more persecuted, and gay men had to perform in a certain way in order to mask that they themselves were homosexuals, so the idea of performativity was not strange or unfamiliar to queer culture,” Ulen said. “That men play women is the feeling of a gay man having to mask himself and perform as though he was not gay.”

According to Ulen and Santiago, Genet said that if he had his way, he would put a placard in front of the play reading, ‘The Maids are played by men.’

“It reminds the audience that they’re watching a play, they’re watching men play women, not women just existing,” Santiago said. “It invites the audience to then question, instead of just accepting things as they are, why do we perform gender? Why do we imitate people?”

The actors worked towards a physicality of performance, adding to the layers of perception — the camera, gender performance and the acting itself.

“We were looking up drag queens, Norma Desmond, I was like, who are these old Hollywood stars that I could get some inspiration from at being physical and open.” Campbell Keller ’26 (Madame) said.

Though drag influenced the actors’ physicality, Valle specifically avoided costume design that translated into drag.

“I don’t necessarily think that I used aspects of queer culture to inspire me, but rather allowed it to just exist within the work. If anything, thinking about it in retrospect, the costume for Madame was definitely something created with the idea of her being on a runway in mind,” Valle wrote.

COURTESY PHOTOS / STEVE JAMES
Zeph Santiago ‘26.5 and Ryan Ulen ‘26 performed in “The Maids” in Seeler Studio Theatre

FEELING THINGS: AMANDA UGORJI AND SOPHIE CHIEN WITH ‘JUST PRACTICE’

By PROSPER CASTELLI
Countributing Writer

Designers Amanda Ugorji and Sophie Weston Chien like things soft — which is interesting because their work addresses hard issues: immigration, redlining, the climate crisis, flooding and injustice.

Ugorji and Chien addressed this dichotomy during their talk, “just practice; practicing process,” which was delivered in Johnson Memorial Building on April 9. With backgrounds in architectural design, urban planning and community organizing — but not textiles — the two women, who call themselves “designer-organizers,” have been creating collaborative work in the form of textiles since 2020.

Ugorji is originally from Cambridge, Massachusetts, and has a BA in Architecture from Brown University and a Master of Architecture from MIT. She has worked on urban planning, public design, exhibition production, lighting design and resiliency planning in cities including New York, Boston, Seoul, South Korea and Timișoara, Romania. In addition to her work with Chien, she is an urban planner at the WXY studio in New York.

Chien is from Charlotte, NC. She has a BFA and a Bachelor of Architecture from Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) with a minor in politics and policy. In addition, she has a dual master’s degree in Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning from Harvard’s Graduate School of Design. She is currently a lecturer at the University of Colorado Boulder, serving as a Postdoctoral Associate Lecturer in environmental design. She describes herself as “a designer organizer” — someone who builds community through social and physical infrastructure to ensure people can shape their own spaces.

“Our interest in textiles was really about the capacity to have an interactive medium, something that you can touch that was soft, which is a reaction to the harsh disciplines of architecture, where everything is precise and clear and shiny,” Chien said.

Their first work, created in 2020 and titled “Soft City,” consists of three large-scale textiles depicting maps of Black neighborhoods in the Boston area. Using texture and color, the textiles show flood zones, redlined communities and ecological resilience.

But the rugs are also great to look at. Speaking about the flexibility of textiles as a medium, Chien said, “I think there’s an interesting negotiation of what’s really legible. People won’t know the stories behind each of the rugs. They’ll just kind of see general patterns of some folks came on a plane, some folks came in a car. And so I think having some of those levels of concealment and privacy was really interesting.”

Textiles also invite touch. According to Ugorji, over 5,000 hands have touched “Soft City” — an action that both designers encourage.

“We’ve seen it take wear and tear; it is such a strange experience to watch something literally degrade from being touched and be kind of happy about it,” Ugorji said.

Ugorji and Chien’s most recent work, created in 2025, is “Touching Toxicity,” which consists of six tufted textiles that portray different toxic environments in the Bay Area of California. One depicts toxic air particles that once surrounded a school in Richmond, VA, resulting from the 2012 Chevron Richmond fire. Another focuses on former salt ponds next to Menlo Park, CA, which have become the habitat for the Snowy Plover, a small shorebird found in the Americas.

Ugorji and Chien chose the six locations by speaking with local activists, scientists and community members.

“We wanted to actually start with experts there because we knew that they had relationships with community members,” Chien said.

The textiles were created by “tufting” — a process where yarn is punched into a “substrate,” or backing material, to create a shaggy, textured or soft surface.

“Tufting is different from a lot of textile practices because we’re starting with the substrate,” Chien explained. “You actually stretch the substrate and then tuft onto it. So it feels a little bit more like painting with yarn than having to do the work of patterning what you’re actually doing.”

The speed and instant gratification of tufting appeal to Chien. “I found that tufting really matches my attention span,” she said.

Ugorji and Chien met more than 10 years ago as students with similar interests.

“When we work together, we do have a united voice. It’s not like two people coming together. It’s a collaboration between two people. That has one kind of voice with what it makes,” Chien said.

Though Chien and Ugorji acknowledged that the current political climate has made creating art harder — funding cuts to environmental organizations have threatened the designers’ access to environmental data, for example — they remain convinced of the importance of art and design to communicate hidden truths.

“Let your work enter the world and see what happens,” Ugorji said.

COURTESY PHOTOS / TIM CORREIRA
Ugorji and Chien’s work “Touching Toxicity.”

CONVERSATIONAL ART: DEVIN SANTIKARMA

By CHRISTY LIANG
Arts & Culture Editor

COURTESY PHOTO / DEVIN SANTIKARMA

One of Devin Santikarma's photographs

Christy Liang: What drew you to photography?

Devin Santikarma '26: My parents are anthropologists, and I think growing up between 2 places, I always thought about how to represent one world to another. Photography is one of the most fulfilling ways to do that, I guess. It embodies the ability to represent someone else's perspective, the ability to really have a glimpse into their world and how they see things in a sort of snapshot moment.

CL: I like what you said about stepping into other people's shoes. Because that's sometimes, I feel the opposite with the lens in between you and other people, as it can become distancing. Do you have something special that brings you closer to them?

DS: The positionality of the photographer matters a lot. I think it shows in work when you yourself have like proximity to what you're photographing versus when you're doing it on something completely different. When Parasite won the Oscar, the director quoted Scorsese. "The most personal is the most creative," is what he said. And so I think using it to explore your own community and the things that you know the most intimately is how you can get around the more exploitative or disconnected forms of photography.

CL: Have you experimented with how this relational intimacy might inform your work differently?

DS: Yeah, I felt really disconnected from photography halfway through my time here at Midd, and so I took some time off to really delve into that as seriously as I could. I went back to Indonesia for the first time as an adult. Seeing it through a different lens than I did in childhood. And I feel like I really used photography as a way to capture those experiences that I do have proximity to, but also don't, right? It's about having a bilateral identity. I hope that in making that article on, on Subak, these traditional irrigation methods in Bali, it shows my own proximity to it and the fact that I am also personally invested in it, in a way that's different from a journalist who goes in and goes out. I try to align myself with more visual anthropological methods rather than journalism specifically.

CL: Where do you see ethnographic methods or perspectives come into play?

DS: I think just immersing yourself in the worlds that you're trying to represent. That's actually why I don't do much photography here in Vermont, since I feel pretty disconnected from Vermont. Whereas I felt super motivated to do it in Indonesia because I have a connection to it. Or, when I took photographs of my family during COVID which was a really arduous process, but it really taught me a lot. And I think when you're doing storytelling on yourself, it's the easiest way.
It's one of the best ways to learn how to do it with other people.

CL: What are your artistic inspirations? Or who?

DS: I have a part-time job working for this skateboarding media company Skatefol.io, and my boss, Josh Katz, is a skateboarder, but he's also a top photographer.
Ahmed M Badr, my friend, who I met when I was like a kid, and he made a storytelling platform, Narratio.org, that published my earliest photographs. Ocean Vuong. He's really getting into photography now. He just had his first exhibition in New York, which was a collection of photographs with his brother . Even the camera he uses, I have the same one. I like his work and how poetic, personal and self-reflective it is.

CL: Since you mentioned Susan Sontag earlier, do you perceive any tension between scholarship on photography and the creative process? Do you see them as complementary, or does one erode the other?

DS: I think it's hard because I feel very unqualified to speak on it. My best friend Thomas really helped me with photography — we talk about it all the time. He went to art school, we grew up making skateboarding films together, and he's working in New York right now. I've taken every photography class I can here. I think there is tension. For me, the essence of photography is going out there and experiencing it and trying it yourself. At the same time, though, I don't know if this counts as scholarship, but finding photo books has really helped me. I really love the work of Alec Soth — getting his book really helped me learn a lot about photography. And more modern photographers like Adali Schell or Sinna Nasseri. I also didn't even know at first that there could be this fine art world of photography. So it's hard because everyone's being like: "You can't make it as a photographer," but at the same time, it's probably easier now than ever to carve out your own career path that's really specific to you and not binary or one-dimensional. That's kind of how I see the world from my positionality since I was a kid. I try to, at least.

CL: How about the classes you took? Do you think they helped you?

DS: Definitely. I can't say enough good things about my professors, Michelle Leftheris and Phoebe Streblow. I think the classes helped me, but also just the process of going out and seeing what could happen with a camera and with myself — like when I was in Indonesia — that was also really important. Not more, but a different kind of learning process. At the same time, I think it's really great to share your photographs, which I'm really bad at doing. And it's really great to have people engage with your work — the process of critique, when people see everything that you do. I love that process. And Michelle herself, just knowing Michelle and having her engage in my work, and making my first photo book, that all really helped me have a kind of structure. Because the problem with pushing yourself by yourself is that sometimes it doesn't come out. That's also why I like to see photography as more of an art as opposed to a journalistic thing, where the moment you do something, it has to be timely. I'm really excited to share work that I've done in Indonesia that hasn't come out yet, but still exists and is still being made, and unmade and remade. So yeah, taking photography classes helped, especially with that communal feedback.

CL: What makes a photograph "good" for you? Beyond composition, or including it?

DS: I love the compositional factors. I remember I showed my work to a photojournalist in high school, and the first thing he told me was, like, you're not thinking about light enough. And I think that really changed my perspective in how I photograph. But I think for me it's also the visual storytelling presence within it. Like, obviously, Ocean Vuong's work, knowing that these photos — even if they're not the most technically informed — I mean, they are too, like, they're great too — but even though this is a new medium for him, it shows his engagement with life and his engagement with the subject that he's trying to portray. So I think it's all these other dimensions beyond just the photograph. But I am partial to really good composition. And portraiture, that's probably where I find the most satisfaction, more than landscape or anything like that.

CL: With portraiture, how do you capture the soulful essence of someone?

DS: I think it's got to be in your relationship with that person. One of my photography teachers always said you can tell when a photograph is taken by a sibling, because the looks you get are really, really different from anything else. I remember taking photographs of some survivors of this genocide that happened to my family in Indonesia, who are family to me too. I was using this manual, 1950s lens on a high-resolution camera, and it was really hard to focus. I couldn't just "spray and pray" and make sure everything was exactly lined up in focus, especially with the shallow depth of field. I remember there was this one photo I took of my uncle, in the place where my grandfather, his father, was killed. All the other ones were blurry, but this one photo just managed to be perfectly in focus. So I feel like there's also an element of mysticism.

CL: Do you feel a discrepancy between the moment as it's captured and how it felt to be there?

DS: I think for me, eventually, photographs replace memories. Or not fully replace, but photographically, they stand in for them. And the faultiness or politics of memory is obviously a big theme in what I like to photograph, especially with my family coming from this forgotten genocide that has this kind of collective amnesia around it. So I feel like the photographs become the memories. And I think photography essentializes the moment, which is honestly more powerful, because it becomes more accessible. Thinking of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "strategic essentialism," you can actually gain more by essentializing your experience. That was something hard for me. Even when I won my first award, I was worried about pandering to this Orientalist view, like selling an exotic vision of Bali. But I think for me now it's about meeting people where they're at, being accessible, and then once they're there, taking them in a direction they weren't going to go initially. So I brought up the genocide my family went through, where it felt relevant — but it's about how much you can afford to complicate after that. And that's one of the hard things about making work about yourself, knowing when to pull in and push back.

CL: Do you intend to become a professional photographer?

DS: I hope I can do visual storytelling in whatever medium allows me to. Whether that's pursuing something more overtly artistic, like going to art school, kind of depends. I feel like for me it's about putting out all the work that I can right now, seeing what people resonate with, and then kind of following that. I think with being artistic, your work becomes something bigger than yourself, and seeing how people respond to it will help determine that path. I don't know — I don't want to be employed, unemployed — I don't know. But yeah, that's my answer.

TAPPED-IN: TRACK & FIELD MULTIS

By SIMON SCHMIEDER
Senior Sports Editor

Jack of all trades, master of some — in a sport where good "multis" are few and far between, the Middlebury track & field program has had a unique few seasons. Emily Rubio '26 and Caleb Smith '27 have represented the Panthers on the NCAA stage a combined seven times in the multi-sport event, and in this issue of Tapped-in, I spoke with the duo to better understand what their competition entails.

A "multi" in track and field competes in either the pentathlon, heptathlon or decathlon. During the indoor season, women compete in the single-day pentathlon: 60-meter hurdles, high jump, shot put, long jump and the 800 meters. While indoors, men compete in the two-day heptathlon: the 60-meter dash, long jump, shot put, and high jump occur on day one, and the 110-meter hurdles, pole vault and 1k on day two. Both competitions take place in the exact same order, and athletes are always given 30 minutes between events. No electronic devices are allowed during these breaks, and at higher-level meets, a personal referee monitors each athlete — even by the urinals, as in Smith's case at the indoor NCAAs this winter.

"You're kind of caged for seven hours," Rubio said.

The challenge escalates in the outdoor season. Women compete in a revised two-day heptathlon: the 100-meter hurdles, high jump, shot put, and 200 meters occur on the first day, with the long jump, javelin and 800 meters reserved for day two. Men compete in the decathlon: Day one includes the 100 meters, long jump, shot put, high jump and 400 meters, while the 110-meter hurdles, discus, pole vault, javelin and 1500 meters occur on the second day.

Athletes score points on an exponential scale. Certain events are weighed more than others, with an emphasis on running over jumping and throwing. The formula used to calculate scores is

A x (P – B)C, where A, B and C are constants unique to each event, and P represents the athlete's performance in that event. Placement within each event is irrelevant — athletes are ranked by the sum of their scores across all events.

With logistics established, it is evident that multi-event competitions demand ridiculous versatility from athletes. Being able to hurl a 16-pound shot is not conducive to running a fast 1500, just as launching a javelin far doesn't lend itself to being a good hurdler. In the outdoor heptathlon and decathlon, simply completing the sheer number of events means a seven- to eight-hour day of competition, and the longest running event is always saved for last— a genuinely cruel and unusual marathon.

Are multis masochists? Rubio and Smith's respective histories with the sport suggest not. For Rubio, her journey began from the bars and on the beam. "From a young age, I did gymnastics, and I turned out to be really bad at that, but I was really good at the running and jumping part," Rubio explained. She took her abilities to the track, quickly specializing in the hurdles and high jump. By high school, her coach saw the potential.

"My coach was like, 'Hey, I'm gonna put you in this pentathlon, it's five events, you already do two of them, why don't we try it?'" The pentathlon clicked for her, and after a few years of sticking with the event, Rubio now holds Middlebury's pentathlon and heptathlon school records, and All-American pentathlon honors, among other accolades.

Smith's multi-tale follows a similar thread. He was a thrower in high school, specialising in javelin and shot put. Then, in his sophomore year, his moment came.

"One day I just left [the throwing area] and went over to the high jump, started high jumpin'."

The migration grabbed the attention of Smith's coach, who signed him up for the annual Connecticut state high school decathlon. Smith placed 15th out of 48, an impressive debut. To compete in college, Smith would have to clear taller hurdles, throw a heavier shot and discus and formally learn how to pole vault. With five years gone, his achievements at Middlebury — the heptathlon school record, all-NESCAC honors and All-American heptathlon honors, to name a few — speak for themselves.

Despite having both excelled as multis, Rubio and Smith take markedly different approaches to the discipline. "The order of events shapes my mindset. First is hurdles, and if I do well in that, it kind of sets the tone for the rest," Rubio explained about the pentathlon. The events are all interrelated for her, and even frustration from a poor performance in one event can motivate a better performance in the next. "It's a whole rollercoaster of emotions for sure," Rubio remarked.

"I find it hard to stay locked in the whole time," Smith said in contrast. "I never take it too seriously." The decathlon typically lasts a combined 14 hours across both days— to remain focused the entire time is a battle in itself. "Right when I get on the runway, I'll lock it in, but if I'm not actively doing something, I'll just be hanging out," Smith explained.

Yet Rubio and Smith agree on the isolation that results from training as a multi. Between two-a-day sessions, frequent lifts and a unique training schedule, multis often practice alone. Meets can be isolating as well. "You're kind of just fighting your own demons ... all that mental work can be very draining," Rubio said.

From needing six pairs of shoes to scoring more points than entire teams at the NESCAC Championship (there is no multi-event competition at the meet, so Rubio and Smith compete — and excel — in multiple events as individuals), the discipline is a true test of the all-around athlete. Being a multi, then, has been less an exercise in masochism and more a showcase of the Swiss Army Knife-like athleticism of Middlebury track & field's atypical duo.

COURTESY PHOTO / GEORGE MADISON

Spring break: Caleb Smith '27 before competing in the javelin at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego.

COURTESY PHOTO / STOCKTON PHOTO

Emily Rubio '26 holds the school record in both the pentathlon and heptathlon.

WOMEN'S TENNIS SWEEP TRINITY AT HOME

By THIE HARTHONO
Sports Editor

On Saturday, April 11, the #12 Middlebury women's tennis team took care of business at home, sweeping Trinity 7-0 inside an empty Nelson Recreation Center. The win was Middlebury's 13th against Trinity. With the victory, the Panthers remain undefeated against the Bantams. Saturday's result also came on the heels of a confidence-boosting sweep of #13 Williams last week. The Panthers currently sit third in the NESCAC with a record of 9–4 (5–1 against conference opponents) and look poised to make a deep postseason run.

Action opened in the doubles matches. In the top spot, Elsie Van Wieren '28 and Anna Lardner '26 secured the Panthers' first point with a 6-2 win. Captain Lulu Wu '26 and Ananya Annapantula '27 cruised to a 6-1 win in the second spot. First years Ren Barton '29 and Diya Pachamuthu '29 won the closest set of the afternoon 6-4, completing the Panthers' sweep in the doubles.

Then came the singles: on the Nelson Recreation Center's four courts, the Panthers quickly put their opponents away. Van Wieren won in straight sets in the top spot, conceding a single game, and Lardner gave no quarter in the second, beating her opponent 6-0, 6-0. Charlotte McCann '26 prevailed 6-2, 6-1 in the third slot, sealing the Middlebury victory. In the fourth slot, Elizabeth Doak '28 conceded just two games.

COURTESY PHOTO / JOSH BARBER

Lulu Wu '26 earned her 60th doubles win in the #2 slot against Trinity.

Rested from their doubles bouts, Pachamuthu and Annapantula retook the court in the fifth and sixth spots. The victory secured, the rest of the team cheered on Pachamuthu and Annapantula as they completed the Panthers' sweep.

"It's always great to be home in Nelson," Wu said, reflecting on the team's energy. "We hope everyone keeps fighting even if matches aren't that close — it makes us want to play our best and perform the best that we can."

The Panthers' commanding victory over Trinity on Saturday provided an opportunity for the team to work on their game as the postseason approaches. "These matches are really helpful for us to work on the things that we need to work on," head coach Olivia Leavitt said. "All of us were working on our long-term process as opposed to short-term results, and we can always improve on that," Doak said.

The Panthers 4–3 record against non-conference opponents reflects the strength of their schedule. Middlebury has earned two victories against the current eighth-ranked Pomona-Pitzer this season, but also lost a close contest against #4 University of Chicago. The Panthers also dropped their matchups against top-ranked Claremont-Mudd-Scripps and second-ranked Washington University.

"We've been really tested by some of the best teams in the country, which has been really helpful for us to see where we're at and where we need to get better — I think we're right there with a lot of the other top programs in the country," Leavitt said.

The Panthers followed up on their dominant win with a 5-2 victory against Tufts the next day. The team returns home for back-to-back NESCAC competitions this weekend, facing Amherst on Saturday and Hamilton — their senior-day matchup — on Sunday. The matches provide the team with a chance to tighten the screws as they approach postseason competition.

"Hopefully, if we keep building with each match we play, each week of practice, then we should be playing our best tennis when it comes to May," Leavitt said.

MIDDLEBURY MEN'S GOLF FALLS AT DR. TIM BROWN INVITATIONAL

By KANAN CLIFFORD
Sports Editor

COURTESY PHOTO / DAVID ZHAO

First year standout Evan Fulgieri '29 shot a career-best 71 on Sunday.

Middlebury men's golf continued its spring season with a 12th-place finish at the Dr Tim Brown Invitational, held in frigid Ballston Spa, NY, last weekend.

On Saturday, the Panthers struggled to a +30 clip, with a whopping seven doubles or worse, and only five birdies. Sunday brought with it warmer weather and warmer putters, as freshman standout Evan Fulgieri '29 roared to an even par 71, and Charlie Schulman '26 posted a respectable 4 over 75, helping the team to a +19 finish.

The Panthers had opened their spring slate on April 4 at the Bantams/Hawks Spring Invitation in Windsor Park, Conn., with a ninth-place finish. A manageable Keney Park Golf Course led to a strong scoring average for the Panthers over two rounds (73.875), while the victorious Hofstra golfers averaged three shots better, storming to a 70.875 over two days. Schulman paced the group, posting a 2-under 68 on Day Two en route to a tie for sixth place.

The Tim Brown Invitational fell in a similar bucket. An identical starting lineup, except with Lincoln Mackay '29 instead of Jake Forrest '29, faltered out of the gate. The Panthers were unable to get off the bogey train— "we struggled taking a bogey and not being able to reset on the next hole," Nate Keshen '28 said.

To find their form, the Panthers cannot rely on Schulman alone. They will need their starting lineup to coalesce and play two complete rounds of golf. The three freshmen - Fulgieri, Mackay, and Forrest - as well as Julian Galindo Macias '27 (who was abroad in the fall) and Nate Keshen '28 have all shown their potential to shoot in the low-to-mid 70s, but they must do so consistently both next weekend and at NESCACs to put pressure on blue-blood teams like Amherst and Bowdoin.

Though these past two weekends haven't gone the Panthers' way, they merely serve as warmups for the main event — the NESCAC championship. Hosted by Trinity College at Fox Hopyard Golf Club in Connecticut, regular season play is immaterial, as the weekend-long tournament determines Middlebury men's golf's hopes and dreams.

One major complication for the Panthers' NESCAC hopes has been the Keshen-dubbed "curse of Middlebury men's golf", with both Logan Wang '27 (dislocated shoulder) and Brendan O'Holleran '26 (broken finger) lost to injury. Wang helped spearhead the team's best finish of the fall: shooting a fiery 2-under 69 on Day Two of the tournament to leapfrog into sixth place individually, and more importantly, to push the team into third place overall.

Without Wang, the underclassmen serve a critical role. "They have revolutionized our culture," Captain Brendan O'Holleran '26 said of Fulgieri, Mackay and Forrest in the fall. Keshen, the group's appointed "glue guy," started hot this weekend with a 1-under 34 on the front nine at Ballston Spa. The success of these four is the team's success.

However, golf is a fickle sport. New two-time Masters champion Rory McIlroy spent 15 years searching for his first green jacket before winning two in back-to-back fashion. For McIlroy, it took a mindset shift: remaining aggressive even while struggling through a seemingly insurmountable mental block at Augusta, GA. The doubt creeps in, but unlike other sports, golf's turtle pace allows the uncertainty to fester.

Take a look at football, basketball, hockey — all sports where athleticism alone can often overcome most need for mental skills. Golf is unique. Every single Middlebury golfer has the talent and the swing needed to be great. They must unlock an enhanced level of mental competitiveness to succeed. Just three years ago, the Panthers posted a tied-seventh finish at the Dr Tim Brown Invitational and went on to win the NESCAC championship. They can do it again if the underclassmen expect to succeed.

COURTESY PHOTO / SIMON LEIDERMAN

Pure focus from captain Brendan O'Holleran '26.